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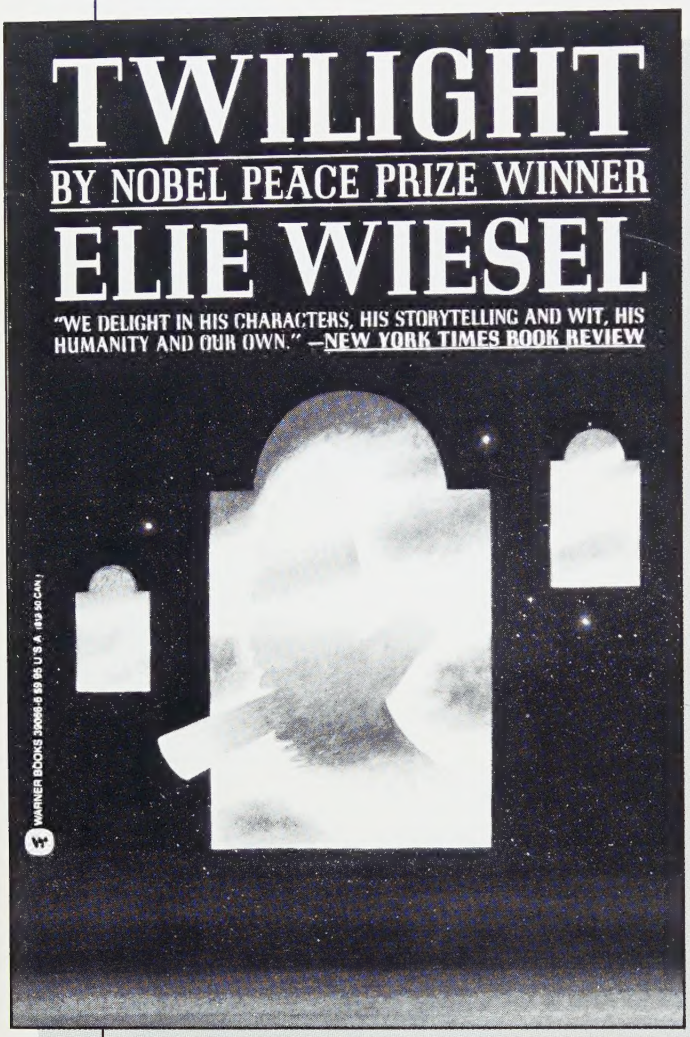
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LILITH

FALL 1989/5750 VOL. 14, NO. 4

FEATURES

AT THE CENTER OF THE STORM
By Miriam Arond
What draws Jewish women into politics? And how can they raise the money to win? Plus a list of what needs to be done right now on the issues we care about 8

BADGES OF SHAME
The remarkable authentic dolls of Trudie Strobel tell the story of Jewish women's restrictive clothing through the ages; Susan Schnur tells *Strobel*'s story—of healing, for the New Year 5750 14

REVISIONIST MYTH-MAKING
By Alicia Ostriker
A chilling look at Biblical figures via three new *midrashim*, or moral tales 17

ADULT BAT MITZVAH: A REVOLUTION FOR WOMEN AND SYNAGOGUES
By Ruth Mason
Thousands of women do now what they couldn't do then. The rite of passage we associate with adolescence has special meaning—and different conflicts—when you're over 21, 41 or 61 21

THE WAYS WE ARE
By Rochelle Namak
The mother of an autistic daughter adjusts her expectations of *naches* ... 32

TAPPING A STONE
A poem about infertility by Jane Schapiro 16

A CHILDHOOD WITHOUT PARENTS
By Edna Manes
The sorrows, dislocations and unexpected sources of strength in a girl whose father leaves her in an orphanage 25

Cover photograph of Brooklyn District Attorney Elizabeth Holtzman by Joyce Ravid

DEPARTMENTS

FROM THE EDITOR 2

LETTERS 3

KOL ISHAH 4
Rescued children 50 years later; a new alimony tactic; Israeli politics and women's studies

LILITH REVIEWS 6
Useful Gifts by Carole Glickfield; *Total Immersion* by Allegra Goodman; *Don't Blame Mother* by Paula J. Caplan

TSENA-RENA 30
Global resources for Jewish women—where to go for what

LILITH MARKETPLACE 33

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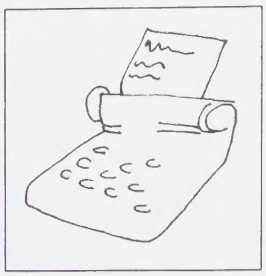
FROM THE EDITOR


Sheila Shapiro-Cortez

Although usually in this space I write about some specific topic that concerns us as Jewish women, I wanted to share with you this time some sense of how this issue's contents actually got shaped, and the ways in which we find some articles, and others find us.

One of the most striking articles here came to us unsolicited, in the form of a small packet of photographs "over the transom." They showed porcelain dolls made by Trudie Strobel, a child survivor of the Holocaust who initially wanted only the photos to run in the magazine unaccompanied by any text about the artist. But we were equally interested in the story of Strobel herself, and the motive behind her painstaking crafting of these exact replicas. Features Editor Susan Schnur spent much time on the telephone with Strobel as they discussed her works and those details of her own life she was willing to impart to LILITH's readers. The result in "Badges of Shame" is, I think, a quite remarkable testimony to the possibility of deriving something positive out of overwhelming devastation.

The short piece that ends this issue—a meditation on raising an autistic child by Rachelle Namak—also came to the office unsolicited. At first we wanted to trim it down to letter size, since it was so clearly in response to the articles we had run in past issues about high-achieving Jewish women and their relationships with family members. But it wasn't a full-length article. Its special poignancy warranted a special setting; we decided to feature it on our back page.

With these two features and the memoir by Edna Manes, childhood inadvertently became a sub-theme of this issue. "A Childhood Without Parents" was submitted to LILITH by Manes' granddaughter!

Other stories were generated, as they say, "in house." We had long been fans of the poetry and criticism of Alicia Ostriker, and are delighted to publish here some new *midrashim,* or revised Biblical tales, she has written. The ways we read the Bible will be changed after we absorb Ostriker's retellings.

For some time we'd been hearing from women all across the continent who were celebrating Bat Mitzvah ceremonies as adults, bringing to the occasion and to their own lives a new consciousness. Ruth Mason's story pulls together some fascinating accounts about the motives behind—and the consequences of—adult Bat Mitzvah for women of different ages and backgrounds. The phenomenon suggests the unexpected changes in synagogue life that follow.

Both Ruth Mason's and our cover story on Jewish women in American politics by Miriam Arond are subjects we assigned because we ourselves were fascinated by them. I hope you will be too.

GIVE LILITH AWAY

An urgent message to our sponsors:
LILITH's staff asks you to reach out and make a difference in the life of someone you know. LILITH needs to grow beyond its current circulation. And you often need a vehicle with which to transform the opinions of certain people around you: your mother, daughter, rabbi, friend, and so on. Please take this opportunity to fill out the subscription card in this issue, and give LILITH as a gift to your friends.

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LILITH thanks the following for their generous financial support: Joan W. & Robert H. Arnow Family Foundation, Beverly Baker, Bank Leumi, Alan Bloch, Matilda Brandwine, Lillian Braude, Linda Bronfman, Joan Bronk, Brooklyn Chapters/National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, Sandra F. Cahn, Susan Citrin, Liza Cowan, Leonard Farber, Fel-Pro Mecklenburger Foundation, Marilyn Freedman, Florence Gantz, Zvia Ginor, Marilyn M. Goldberg, Joan Goldrath, Yvette Gralla, Edith R. Gribetz, Nancy K. Grosfeld, Susan Grossman, Julie L. Gurwin, Sharon Hart, Doreen N. Hermelin, Jane Isay, Marian Kantor, Patricia Karlin-Neumann, Samuel and Francine Klagsbrun, Diane J. Klein, Sharon Wilkes Klein, Renee S. Krieger, Ellen Labes, Linda Lee, Terran Leemis, Frieda S. Leemon, Max & Anna Levinson Foundation, Belda Lindenbaum, Lauren K. Liss, Lucius N. Littauer Foundation, Raquel H. Newman, Blanche Pollack, Ruth Popkin, Maida Portnoy, Victoria Pryor, Rabbi Laurie Rutenberg, Schocken Foundation, Amy Schuman, Ruth Septee, Shefa Fund, Rachel Siegel, Donna Slatkin, Sally Soberman, Marcia Cohen Spiegel, David & Fran Spilke, Mary Ann Stein, Barbara Stollman, Sharon Strassfeld, Charlotte Tessler, Joy Ungerleider-Mayerson, Mira J. Van Doren, Ruth Warshauer, Henny Wenkart, Jennie L. Whitehill, Rose D. Wolman, Samuel & Roslyn Wolpert.

LILITH thanks for their advice and assistance: Chaim Gerlitz, Joan Sadinoff Katz, Lynda Levinson, Belda Lindenbaum, Avraham Maoz, Ezra Danis Oberfield, Talya Danis Oberfield, Glenn Richter, Noam Semel.

LETTERS

ARE JEWISH FAMILIES DIFFERENT?

Re your interview with Olga Silverstein ["Jewish Families are Different," Spring 1989]: Was it concerned with families who are Jewish within a certain milieu, i.e. middle to upper-middle class New Yorkers, in order to make certain "therapeutic" assumptions?

Surely having a grasp on the ethnic/cultural background of a family is necessary to understanding family relationships but it cannot and should not be made into broad generalizations about *all* Jewish women, *all* Jewish men, *all* WASPS, etc. Such generalizations as Jewish males get "more depressed" as their wives become more independent has nothing to do with Jewishness but rather with shifting polarities in a family system, with gender differentiation and how it plays itself out within a specific cultural milieu.

Karen Schulte
Oakdale NY

MOTHERS AND OTHERS

I appreciated the editorial about the decline of "mother-blaming" (Summer 1989) — and then was highly amused to see your editor commit the same error in the little blurb about my piece in the table of contents in the same issue. Using the traditional semi-psychoanalytic method, she attributed my work on anger to *mother's* influence. Well, of course she influenced my thinking. But so did my father, who had a rousing, furious temper and was quick to let you know it. So did my adult experiences, with the women's movement and with the study of social psychology. It's the glib reduction of a writer's work to "Mom" that Paula Caplan (see Review, p. 30) so objects to, as do I. Sorry — but I couldn't resist pointing out how pervasive "mother-attributing" is, even when it's meant kindly.

Carol Tavris
Los Angeles, CA

Tavris is the author of Anger: The Misunderstood Emotion.

FIRST-CLASS WOMEN

Your short piece, "B'nai B'rith Goes Co-ed" [Spring 1989], may give an impression other than the one I hope you may have intended.

You quoted someone who implied that B'nai B'rith Women is not a humanist organization, but a feminist one, and that being so is a pejorative condition. It is unfortunate that LILITH would lend credence to viewing feminism in that light.

There also was an inference in the article that members of B'nai B'rith Women were second-class citizens. B'nai B'rith International and B'nai B'rith Women had reached an agreement several years ago (broken by B'nai B'rith International when they admitted women) that women would be members of the B'nai B'rith through their membership in BBW and could rise to high office in either organization. Neither then, nor now, was B'nai B'rith Women membership anything less than first class.

Hyla Lipsky
Washington DC

The author is national president of B'nai B'rith Women.

TOWARD A BETTER WORLD

I am a new midwife, and I have decided that in the spirit of *tzedakah* and the spirit of celebration, I will donate $18 toward a better world with each child I help to be born.

This is the first, in thanksgiving for baby Mari. It seems only right that the first goes to bring connection, and perhaps hope, to a refusenik sister.

Thanks for your help and your work.

Deborah Kutenplon
Northampton MA

Editor's Note: This donation to LILITH was for a gift subscription to a Soviet refusenik woman. Donors of these subscriptions receive a letter from LILITH with the recipient's name and address. A gift card is sent to her. Should you wish to order refusenik subscriptions, send $18 for each to LILITH Magazine, 250 W. 57th St. Suite 2432, New York, NY 10107.

CAMPUS LIFE, CONT'D.

Largely through the efforts of a group of Jewish faculty members called together by Rabbi Yechiael Lander, who spends a great deal of his time and energy at Smith, Jewish consciousness on campus—particularly among the administration—is beginning to grow. The college is increasingly trying to take the Jewish calendar into account in planning activities and events; it has "de-institutionalized" certain traditional practices, such as an annual "Christmas vespers" ceremony, and the setting up of Christmas trees on college grounds and in each dormitory; it has established and equipped a kosher kitchen; it has established a Jewish Studies Program; and it has committed itself (as your reporter noted) to attracting more Jewish students to the school. These are small steps, but they have definitely made positive changes in the climate for Jews and Jewish students on campus.

Martha Ackelsberg
Northampton MA

The author is professor of government and member of the Jewish Studies Program Committee at Smith College.

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KOL ISHAH

Kol Ishah — "Woman's Voice." Traditionally, the voice of the Jewish woman was not to be heard in public, lest it arouse men. No more. These pages are for news about Jewish women, usually in their own strong voices.

KINDERTRANSPORT REUNION: A PERSONAL REMEMBRANCE

London, June 20, 1989 ... A remarkable woman, Bertha Leverton, small in stature, but large in vision, opens the ceremonies of the Reunion of Kindertransport in Harrow Hall. I sit amongst 1,000 women and men from all over the world, who share my fate, or something similar, and think back to a half century before.

One woman stands out among the rest in our memories. Her name was Gertrude Wijsmuller-Meyer, a Dutch social worker, author of *No Time for Tears*. In early December 1938, she took a train from Holland to Vienna to meet Adolf Eichmann. The Nazis harassed her. She was thrown in jail. Undaunted, she insisted on obtaining Eichmann's authorization to release 10,000 children to go to England. Laughing, he asked her if she was sure she wasn't Jewish. "No," she said. To check, he ordered her to remove her shoes and raise her dress. Absurd, thought Mrs. Wijsmuller. But for the *kinder*—anything. After a few more obstacles thrown her way, Eichmann agreed to let 600 *kinder* go that coming Saturday. They left Vienna on the Sabbath, 500 to sail on the S.S. De Praag from Hook of Holland to Harwich, England; 100 to wait in Holland for the next ship.

Olga Drucker with British foster-sister, London 1939.

That was the first Kindertransport. From that day to late August 1939, 10,000 *kinder* were transported to safety. Nine thousand never saw their parents again. Mrs. Wijsmuller was honored as one of the Righteous Gentiles at Yad Vashem in Israel.

Stuttgart, Nov. 10, 1938 ... My mother, who has never been called upon to make a decision other than what to plan for our meals, decides, on her own, that I shall live. It is far from easy for her, for it means she will have to send me to a foreign land, with a foreign tongue, perhaps never to see me again. I am nearly eleven-years old.

My Papa was taken away in the middle of last night. I was scared when I heard the men stomping up our stairs to fetch him, but afraid to cry out. Mama has been on the phone since early morning. I am not allowed to go to school today. Soon I will start to go to a Jewish school instead, she tells me. The synagogue in our town was burned to the ground last night. All Jewish men, from 16 to 86, were taken away. She is trying to find out where. What is happening?

A week later... Mama has placed my name on a list. I will go on the Kindertransport to England. She said she and Papa will follow as soon as he comes back. But I don't believe her. I am to start English lessons right away. Papa has been taken to a concentration camp called Dachau. Mama has been on the phone day and night. That is how she found out about the Kindertransport. Her eyes look red.

Dec. 28, 1938 ... My birthday. Papa came back last night! But he has changed. He is thin, his hair is white, he doesn't talk much or smile. Frieda, my nanny since I can remember, had to leave because she let her boyfriend come to our house in his Nazi uniform. I have to be careful what I say. "The walls have ears," Mama says.

March 3, 1939 ... I have to leave today. It's scary but at the same time exciting. I have a family waiting for me in England. They wrote to us and sent a photo. The pastel colors make them look weird. Their lips are too red. I'm afraid they won't like me. I know I won't like them!

I say goodbye to Papa. He has a strange look on his face. Mama comes with me on the train as far as Wiesbaden. Grossmama comes to the platform there to kiss me goodbye. Mama gets off the train and puts her arm around her mother. They wave to me and try to look brave. Other children have come on the train. I press my nose against the dirty window pane until I can't see them anymore. My eyes are wet. None of us have any way of knowing that Grossmama will perish at Theresienstadt a year from now. Nor that I will live in England for six years before I will see my parents again.

London, June 21-22, 1989 ... The 50-year Kindertransport reunion was planned by Bertha Leverton. She has thought of everything, to the last detail. The speakers are from the Jewish Refugees Committee, from the British Government, from the Jewish community in London and the *kinder* themselves. We have learned about the organization of this tremendous undertaking. Many individuals and institutions, in particular the Quakers, were involved.

London, June 25, 1989 ... We thousand from around the world have eaten together these two days of our reunion, have listened and learned together, prayed together, laughed and cried together, and have enjoyed two concerts together. Today we are taken to Dovercourt, Essex, near Harwich. It is where one of several hastily equipped summer camps was opened for us in the winter of 1938-39, where many of us stayed until families could be found to take us in.

"On Sundays, the English families used to come here to pick us over," one *kind* remembers. "I was afraid I would be too ugly to be chosen." Another, who was picked, ran away, back to the camp, despite the fancy clothes she was given. She wanted to be with her friends.

The mayor of Harwich shows us the pier where all of us landed when we first came from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia or Poland, via Holland. A ship filled with happy tourists sits in the harbor. It's a far cry from the tall funnelled steamboats of 50 years ago, but the sight of it overwhelms me. The tourists are nothing like us, bewildered, wide-eyed *kinder* who arrived alone, numbers hanging on tags around our necks, in flight for our lives. Today we are the grandparents. We have lived our lives in other countries, where we have made significant contributions to the society in many different ways. We are all of us grateful to the British for taking us in, to the many women and men responsible for our rescue, and to Bertha Leverton for organizing the never-to-be-forgotten reunion. And I, in particular, am grateful to my mother, who found the untapped strength to make the difficult decision that saved my life.

—Olga Drucker

SELF-DOUBT, CHARITY AND ALIMONY

At a Jewish women's conference at Queens College in New York City this past Spring, Judith Stern Peck, one of the keynote speakers, made these comments:

One thing women have to learn to do is to take risks. We must learn to deal with anxiety, fear of failure, fear of rejection and fear of making wrong decisions.

You know, little boys on the ballfield are encouraged to run and stretch to catch that high-flying ball or to come screeching into home plate, even at the risk of getting hurt. By the time they reach the grown-up world, they've learned to dust themselves off after a fall or a defeat and keep moving forward in a manly way. We have to learn to risk failure and defeat, too, secure in the knowledge that, win or lose, we will bounce back if we have to and move on to other projects, other challenges.

Another thing that I've had to do has been to know when I have accomplished my purpose and it's time to exit gracefully—leaving the rest to others. Having moved the project into existence, we have to learn to let go of it. It's just what we have to learn to do with our children.

You know, when women go

Continued on page 28

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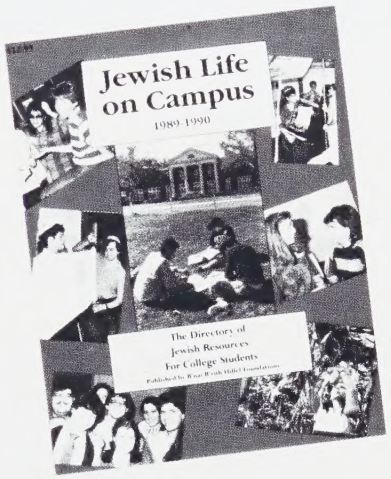

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USEFUL GIFTS
by Carole L. Glickfield
Athens, GA: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1989
209 pp., $14.95

TOTAL IMMERSION
by Allegra Goodman
New York: Harper & Row, 1989
224 pp., $16.95

My fifteen-month-old granddaughter points to the shaggy puppy on the cardboard page, looks up at me and says triumphantly, "Bow wow wow!" Once again the miracle of speech is affirmed, and with it, one of life's primary connections to fellow humans. For Ruthie Zimmer, protagonist of *Useful Gifts*, Carole L. Glickfield's collection of eleven interrelated stories, such connection takes on a different dimension.

The youngest child of deaf-mute parents, Ruthie both speaks and signs. She interprets her Manhattan world of the 40's and 50's to her parents, to the reader and, in the process, to herself. It is she who translates for us the flashing fingers of her parents: language reduced to visible essence. Because *Useful Gifts* is about language, its range and its limits, failure to communicate undergirds most of the stories and leads to the heartbreak with which the older Ruthie will have to grapple in order to get on with her life.

At the center of the book, a powerful story, "My Father's Darling," seems to sum up ten-year-old Ruthie's confused loyalties, her clouded view of both family life and the world outside her fourth-floor apartment. She witnesses a battle between her father and her sister, Melva, over money for school clothes. When Mr. Zimmer refuses to give Melva more than ten dollars, she calls him "cheapskate." Her father smacks the side of her head over and over and rasps, "Honorfather honorfather honorfather." Melva sinks to the floor, arms crossed in front of her face. "Misermisermiser," she says.

Ruthie's brother Sidney, refused money for a catcher's mitt, accuses his father (correctly) of spending money on another woman and receives a terrible beating. Not long after, Ruthie comes home to find a police car in front of the stoop. Her father has bloodied her mother's nose. Only Ruthie, it seems, is her father's darling, able to do no wrong. Why this should be is as puzzling to her as why the other members of her family incur his wrath. It will be twenty years before she can evaluate the love that persists between her and her father and place it in a perspective that will rid her of guilt and give her peace.

In the end, the stories are a tribute to Ruthie's mother, the valiant, wise Hannah, who loves her daughter fiercely and uncompromisingly and who, despite her physical limitations, provides her with the "useful gifts"—those character traits and values that may ultimately be her daughter's salvation.

If *Useful Gifts* has the feeling of an old movie, stark and brooding in its black and white, *Total Immersion*, stories by Allegra Goodman, comes on with the crackling, colorful energy of a music video. Confidently and knowledgeably, Goodman concerns herself mainly with the many-faceted pulls and ironies of contemporary Jewish life. Her favorite milieus are Oxford, England and Hawaii.

Goodman's first story was published in *Commentary* when she was a freshman at Harvard. The stories in *Total Immersion* would be impressive written by anyone; that they are the work of a 21-year old is mind-bending.

Goodman's stories often cut to the bone with their satirical view of contemporary Jewish life among certain Orthodox and Conservative groups. What are we to make of "The Gan" where the youngest child of

E. Bruce Howell

Allegra Goodman

Allegra Goodman doesn't write about the college scene (she's just graduated from Harvard), nor about the other concerns of coupling or job-hunting that have obsessed many of her literary cohort.

"They write a lot about sex. Middle-class people who'd never do those things are fascinated," she says with a laugh. The middle class, and even the middle-aged, star in many of the short stories in Goodman's first collection. She writes in revealing detail about synagogue politics, family dynamics (Jewish and non-Jewish), academic infighting. "I'm interested in communities and institutions, not in people trying to get by *without* institutions. I look at the way people hurt and help each other in communities. (Sometimes both!)"

Interviewed by telephone in Cambridge, Massachusetts as she was working on a novel and preparing for her late-summer marriage to a Harvard classmate, Goodman talked about the experiences that provided much of the material for *Total Immersion*. Growing up in a "traditional" home in Hawaii, the multi-ethnic setting of many of these stories, "I went to *shul* with my parents, and we got our kosher meat from California." Goodman also took frequent trips to England, where her parents had been graduate students. (Her father is a professor of philosophy; her mother, a biologist, is the former director of the University of Hawaii's Women's Studies Program.)

Commenting on the wide range of characters, ages and viewpoints in *Total Immersion*, Goodman says modestly that, while some of her contemporaries focus on explicitly autobiographical material, "When you've only been around 21 years, there are other things to write about besides your own life."

—Susan Weidman Schneider

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THE INVISIBLE THREAD

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Diana Bletter

Photographs by
Lori Grinker

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Sixty American women of all ages and backgrounds, wealthy and on welfare, orthodox and ambivalent, banker and laborer, governor and prisoner--each offers her unique perspective on what it means to be Jewish and female in America.

DIANA BLETTER is Associate Editor of *Lilith.* Her articles have appeared in *Hadassah, Jewish Week, Savvy,* and elsewhere.

LORI GRINKER is an award-winning photographer whose photos have been exhibited here and in Europe; she recently had a cover story in *People.*

An exhibition of the photographs from *The Invisible Thread* are scheduled to travel throughout the United States.

"Practically speaking, it's much easier for me to wear a wig--I can be ready to go out in fifteen minutes."

AT THE CENTER OF THE STORM: JEWISH WOMEN IN POLITICS TALK ABOUT THE ISSUES

by Miriam Arond

Bella Abzug, the Democratic former New York Representative, was the first nationally known Jewish woman politician to go public as a Jew and a feminist. Who are the women who've followed her?

Currently more women are serving in Congress (25) than ever before, according to the Center for the American Woman and Politics at Rutgers University. There are a record three female governors and 1,176 women in state legislatures—four times as many as there were 20 years ago. Today's most prominent Jewish women elected politicians are Brooklyn, NY District Attorney and former Congresswoman Elizabeth Holtzman (D), Vermont Governor Madeleine M. Kunin (D), Westchester, New York Congresswoman Nita Lowey (D), and San Francisco Congresswoman Barbara Boxer (D). These are just the occupants of the top rung, though, in a long ladder of Jewish women who are in influential national and local offices.

What role does being Jewish play in their political lives? Do they face different challenges from their non-Jewish political sisters? Now is a good time to be asking these questions, given the number of Jewish women visible on the political scene today.

Most of these women said that it was precisely their Jewish background that influenced their desire to enter politics!

Take Governor Kunin. Born in Zurich, Switzerland in 1933, she escaped with her family to the United States when she was six, losing many relatives in Germany, Holland and France.

Gov. Madeleine M. Kunin

"Because of the Holocaust I feel very strongly that I can't go through life as an observer," explains Kunin. "We live in a time when it's possible for Jews and women to be full participants in the political process. I feel a sense of urgency that it's important to do so. During the Holocaust we had no choice. Now we have a choice. The old-fashioned approach was for Jews to lay low—to be invisible. The Holocaust proved that was no protection at all."

Mara Guilianti, 44, the Jewish mayor of Hollywood, Florida, offers a somewhat different example. She grew up in Houston, Texas and attributes much of her skill and ease in politics to her experience as a youth with Jewish volunteer groups. Not only was Guilianti a very active member in her Reform temple, but she was also, from the age of 14, a committed B'nai B'rith worker. "I learned to conduct meetings, to speak publicly. I met youth from all over the U.S. and Canada, and so I learned to work adeptly with anyone. These are skills you don't lose. It was phenomenal groundwork."

For Ruth Messinger, an 11-year member of the New York City Council and currently a Democratic candidate for Manhattan Borough President, her political career is rooted in traditional Jewish community service, yet she's no longer identified with it. Her family history is one of public service in the Jewish community: her maternal grandfather was the first executive director of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, both parents served on boards of Federation agencies, and her

Mayor Mara Giulianti

mother is director of public relations at the Jewish Theological Seminary.

"I'm sure my parents' charity work influenced my decision to go into social work," says Messinger. "I took it the next step or two. Social service seemed limited. I wanted to make broader, more systemic changes." At age 35, after working at a parent-run community school and a college training program for low-income adults, she entered politics. "It was a logical next step. When I talk to Jewish groups, I tell them what I hope they'll do is to move beyond charity to justice."

The emphasis in Judaism on a structured moral code is cited by many women as a motive for their political involvement. Family Court Judge Joan B. Lefkowitz (D) of Westchester, New York, who had an Orthodox upbringing, notes, "In Orthodoxy there's a strict discipline that you're adhering to all your life. As a judge you're enforcing the law."

Congresswoman Lowey of Westchester, whose mother was active in Hadassah and the Orthodox Young Israel sisterhood, feels that her religious upbringing emphasized that "I had an obligation to help those less fortunate." Guilianti adds, "The idea of *tzedakah* (charity) has been deeply ingrained in me. I was raised to be extremely compassionate."

This may be looking at women's decision with the benefit of hindsight. Some traced their entry into the political arena through the side door. In many cases political careers evolved not from intentional pursuit, but as a natural outgrowth of the woman's interest in civic issues relevant to themselves and their families.

1990: THE JEWISH STAKE IN ABORTION RIGHTS

The key political issue now for women across North America is abortion rights, challenged both by the U.S. Supreme Court and by the Supreme Court of Canada this year.

Reproductive freedoms are an important Jewish women's issue for at least three reasons: First, to ensure women's rights to safe and legal abortion. Second, to ensure that freedom of religion remains in place in the U.S. and Canada. Because if the forces seeking to restrict abortion win out, Jews who follow Jewish law on matters of abortion (which says that a mother's well-being takes precedence over that of the fetus, and never equated abortion with murder) will have that freedom of religion abrogated. Third, as an important opportunity for coalition-building with other women's groups.

Action in the U.S. is now focused on state elections and lobbying efforts. Jewish women's organizations with non-profit status (which means virtually all the volunteer organizations except for PAC's) are explicitly forbidden from influencing politicians directly, but can engage in "educational" efforts.

Here is a roundup of some representative action taken by Jewish groups since the *Webster* case challenged women's right to safe abortions:

- *American Jewish Congress:* Mailing to members and to activists on its Commission on Sexual Equality lists of legislators to contact before important votes in Congress and locally, and then circulating lists of who should get notes of thanks *after* they vote.
- *Hadassah:* Issued an "action alert" at its national convention calling on members to educate their communities about traditional Jewish guidelines regarding pregnancy and abortion and urging local chapters to join advocacy groups such as National Organization for Women, National Abortion Rights Action League and Planned Parenthood.
- *Women's American ORT:* President Reese Feldman annouced plans "to mobilize the members of 1,200 chapters at the grassroots level to oppose restrictive state measures."
- *National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods:* President Dolores Wilkenfield has launched a "crisis campaign" to monitor state legislatures and mobilize support for women's "freedom of choice in the matter of abortion."
- *National Council of Jewish Women:* Has set up the NCJW Choice Public Education Campaign to provide information on the fallout from the Supreme Court decision—in their words, "on the legal, medical and constitutional rights aspects of abortion."
- *Women's League for Conservative Judaism:* Has urged its members to act on a local level whenever legislation is pending, and has made strong statements in favor of women's reproductive freedoms since the mid-70's.
- *The Religious Action Center:* The activist arm of the Reform movement is preparing a packet to be sent out to Reform and Reconstructionist rabbis about local legislation on abortion rights, so that they can in turn inform their congregants and lobby themselves.

In addition, Rabbi David Feldman, a scholar whose book *Birth Control and Jewish Law* (New York: New York University Press, 1968) has been the standard text in the field, issued a call to Jewish women: "We cannot accept the denominational view of another religion that grants equal human life to the fetus. Women must let legislators know of their concern *as Jewish women.* Women ought to protest any diminution of freedom of choice on the grounds of the difference the Jewish viewpoint provides."

Reproductive rights groups who can send you information about how to monitor the situation in your own locale:

Planned Parenthood Federation of America
810 Seventh Ave.
Box 4447
New York, NY 10163

National Abortion Rights Action League
1101 14th St. NW
Washington, DC 20005

Religious Action Center
2027 Massachusetts Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20036

Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights
100 Maryland Ave. NE #307
Washington, DC 20002

"I got to Congress because of my involvement in the community as a mother," asserts Lowey. "When I moved to Florida, after I got married, I joined ORT and was vice-president of membership and special projects," recalls Guilianti. "But I really found my niche in the National Council of Jewish Women, which is a very political, issues-oriented group. I assumed the volunteer position of public affairs chairwoman for the State of Florida and became knowledgeable about state issues. I was president of the board of a shelter for battered women. I worked on campaigns. I got to see that there were many poor quality representatives and realized I could do a better job."

No matter how they decided to enter politics, being Jewish and female dovetail in interesting ways for all these women. Jews as a general population are far more liberal and more Democratic than other Americans, but this is especially true for Jewish women, according to a recent study conducted by Steven M. Cohen, professor of sociology at Queens College in New York.

Giulianti contends that the fact that three of the five people on her city's commission are women shows in public policy. "We have a sensitivity. We voted to give more money to agencies for homeless and battered women. We just started a "Youth in Government Day" where a teenager from every school in Hollywood comes to learn about government. Previously, an inordinate amount of attention was devoted to retirees and not enough to youth. In this day of gangs and drug addiction, paying attention to youth is essential."

Judge Lefkowitz feels that being Jewish and female is a bonus for a judge. "Between my *Yiddishkeit* and my female intuition, I hope I make the right decision."

But a combination of sexism and anti-Semitism can have a double impact when a politician is Jewish and female.

"Being Jewish didn't help me at all," says Rosemary Pooler (D) of Syracuse, New York, who ran for a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives in 1986 and 1988, losing both times. "In '86, they ran profiles in the newspaper of both candidates—my opposition was the incumbent—and went out of their way to say I was from Brooklyn and that my maiden name was Shankman. On the Sunday before the election, the newspaper ran an editorial saying my opponent is 'a troop leader, a small businessman. He is one of us.' The newspapers were seriously interested in my not getting elected. Anti-Semitic letters came regularly during both campaigns. I became acutely aware that I was part of a minority that is not genuinely loved. I was a Jewish Democratic progressive woman from Brooklyn, running in Republican territory. I just didn't 'fit' the district."

Harriett Woods, the Democratic lieutenant governor of Missouri from 1986 to

WHAT TO DO RIGHT NOW

What can we do to make sure more Jewish women get elected? Here, advice from the experts:

- *Open your checkbook.* "Women must support women and champions of women's rights," asserts Carol Boron, national director of MIPAC. "A candidate can't win if she doesn't have money. Until there's a change in the system, women can't expect a fair shake unless they play by the rules. Candidates who raise the money win the election."
- *Encourage women to run for office.* "Politics is something Jewish women have traditionally stayed away from," notes Boron. "It was considered dirty. Nice Jewish girls didn't get involved." Political involvement "has to start at the state level," she emphasizes. "Women don't just wake up one morning and say, 'I want to work in the Senate.' And we have to encourage our daughters to get involved in politics."

Lynn Cutler, vice chair of the Democratic National Committee, notes that while many of today's women politicians became involved in politics through community volunteer work, now that over 50 percent of women are working, women have less time for voluntary activities.

The concept that many women have of themselves can also be a deterrent to their seeking political power. "The big gender gap is getting women interested in running," maintains Susan Welch, co-author of *The Political Life of the American Jewish Woman* (New York: Biblio Press, 1984). But as more women go into law, more are going into politics."

According to U.S. Congresswoman Nita Lowey, "It's an extraordinary experience to be there where laws are made. But one of the most difficult decisions in running for office is the question: Can you deal with putting yourself on the line? We've been the nurturers, the caretakers. To take charge, to make the laws, is very challenging to our self-concept."

- *Get involved in PAC's.* "The bulk of our female Jewish population lives in certain states. Women in New York, Los Angeles and Chicago don't know there is a race in South Dakota where one candidate is a champion of women's issues and the other wants to take us back to the dark ages," says Boron. "How are you going to know what's going on in Wyoming, New Mexico, North and South Dakota? But your $25, when combined with $25 from 1,000 other women, can make a difference."

Boron urges married women to make political giving a partnership. "So many women pay no attention when their husbands are writing political checks. If women made their husbands accountable for whom they are supporting, they'd be doing a service."

- *Follow up on any personal political interest.* Jane Danowitz, executive director of the Women's Campaign Fund in Washington, D.C., suggests that a woman who is considering entering politics — on any level — call the fund. It offers both formalized training, as well as one-on-one consultations for women candidates running for positions starting at the school board level all the way up. They'll talk to you about your current position, your plans, how to develop a fundraising network, how to use the press effectively, how to broaden your base among your constituents, how to demonstrate that you're fiscally savvy.
- *Be aware of political seats which will be opening as a result of the redistricting coming up following the 1990 census.* It will create a golden opportunity for women and minorities. Danowitz says: "Women should think like men in respect to planning ahead."

Harriett Woods, the former Missouri lieutenant governor, suggests that just as women budget for charity, they need to budget for public policy. They need to ask themselves, "What is it worth for me to change public policy?" That's power! It's a social investment.

Judge Joan B. Lefkowitz

1988, recalls that before the 1986 election, a conservative newspaper in her area ran an editorial referring to her as "Harriett Woods nee Friedman." They also mentioned that she was a cousin of Howard Metzenbaum. "In rural areas my opponents hung signs saying, 'Don't elect Harriett Friedman Woods.' It was clearly trying to say something without just getting up and saying it. They were trying to suggest I was a secret enemy," states Woods.

Renee Unterman, the 35-year-old mayor of Loganville, Georgia, a town an hour outside of Atlanta, maintains that "being a Jewish female is like a double whammy." Unterman underwent an Orthodox conversion ten years ago when she married. She attends weekly services at a Conservative synagogue in Atlanta. With only one other Jewish family living in their town of 3,500 people, Unterman admits "we're definitely an oddity here."

For Unterman, anti-Semitic opposition is right out in the open. "I've had the Ku Klux Klan visit me. They've been against me from day one. I've received verbal threats and threatening letters in the mail."

Unterman, who was born and raised a Catholic, says she gets her courage to stand up against Ku Klux Klan threats from her sense of mission. "Being Jewish I feel I have a goal to achieve. It's very important to me to represent Jews well. I feel I really have to be a good role model. The people here don't know any other Jews. I'm all they have. I have something to accomplish."

Unterman lectures to Jewish organiza-

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RHODA LERMAN

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tions in Atlanta. "They don't understand what is happening. Anti-Semitism is alive and well and kicking and growing. The recent election of David Duke, an ex-Klansman, to the Louisiana State Legislature, is a perfect example of what is happening. Racism is coming back. It's the 50's all over again. Jews should be voting for more Jews in higher up positions and speaking out against anti-Semitism."

Even when anti-Semitism isn't an issue, sexism alone can be a major political deterrent. For women politicians, gaining support—especially financial support—from the male Jewish community has been a challenge.

The first time she ran for a Senate seat in 1982, Woods says she "met with tremendous resistance from Jewish funding groups. AIPAC (American-Israel Political Action Committee) supported my opponent, who was not Jewish. He had a good enough record on Israel, but I was strong on Israel too. And he did not really have a good record on social justice issues."

The extent to which sexism was a factor was demonstrated by an incident when, Woods recalls, Republican Jews sent out an inflammatory letter accusing her of being married to a non-Jewish man and of not raising her children as Jews. "I could rattle off a whole list of Jewish male candidates and incumbents who were married to non-Jewish women, and it was never even brought up as an issue in the Jewish community. If that isn't sexism, what is?" exclaims Carol Boron, national director of Highland Park, Illinois-based MIPAC, a multi-issue Jewish political action committee that supports candidates both for their pro-Israel positions and for where they stand on social issues.

As Woods puts it, "I got it from both sides. I got it from anti-Semites and I got it from Jews who said I wasn't Jewish enough."

The Joint Action Committee (JAC-PAC), a pro-Israel lobbying group of women, was the only Jewish PAC to offer Woods financial assistance in that election. She lost by one percent. "I think it was a very sad example of what happens when you don't get enough money early on to run," says Woods. "I think there were a lot of guilty feelings afterward. In my second race I picked up very good financial support from the Jewish community, and I won. But the fact that I raised $4.5 million in my second race came directly from the efforts of women. The local Jewish fundraising groups are male."

Nita Lowey, in running for Congress, encountered similar resistance. Except for JAC-PAC, most Jewish PAC's supported her opponent who, Lowey says, was good on Israel, but not on issues like child-care. The Women's Campaign Fund, the National Organization for Women, the National Women's Political Caucus and EMILY (Early Money is Like Yeast) all supported her financially early on.

To raise money she also went to friends, colleagues, relatives. "I hate asking for money! I feel like a *shnurer*. But you have to have confidence that you're doing a good job and that the people in the community have to support those who are doing a good job. Women have never been part of the old boy's network. We have to develop our own network."

Women and their hesitation to contribute politically was a reverberating theme among the women interviewed. "Women haven't taken the leap to understand that their own economic plight is tied up with voting for women. It's easier for them to vote for an incumbent or for their own party," states Syracuse attorney Rosemary Pooler.

"Women don't give as readily to politicians as they do to charitable causes. Women will give $100,000 to UJA and $100 to a politician," bemoans Lowey. "It's a matter of education. We have to make women feel they have a stake in the political system."

According to a 1985 survey sponsored by B'nai B'rith Women, Jewish women are more likely than non-Jewish women to join organizations with a political focus. But that doesn't necessarily translate into political contributions. Boron says that when she used to speak before Jewish women's groups about the need for political involvement, she found "their leadership wants the money to go to *their* organization, not to PAC's. It was never fruitful."

Woods laments that, "what you find among women who have battled their way to the top of major businesses is that they're not writing political checks which match their ability to give. It follows a long tradition of women not understanding the way things happen in our society. Women aren't yet comfortable with new power. They're afraid to use it."

She notes that in "the old boys" network, money is raised by one man calling another. "Men understand that the next time it will be their turn to get those calls back," says Woods. "Women don't know the system. For women, charity is related to 'do-goodism.' It's the nurturing and caring syndrome, which is marvelous. But women don't know how to plug into the network of changing the big picture, of

making policy changes."

Increased earning power among women is no guarantee of their increased political contributions to women candidates. "We find that even if a woman is financially successful, let's say in real estate, then she makes her contribution based on the real estate industry," says MIPAC's Boron. "But candidates who are good on real estate issues may be terrible on women's issues. Women who are successful in their field don't know their candidates are bad on women's issues. They don't even think to question."

If Jewish women politicians are proud of the positions they have attained, they are also frustrated. Elizabeth Holtzman (D), the Brooklyn district attorney who in 1973 was the youngest woman ever elected to Congress, says gender has been a far greater obstacle in politics than she could ever have imagined. "I was very involved in the civil rights movement in the South, where we saw dramatic results in a short time period. But the struggle for women is much harder than any of us anticipated."

When she ran for district attorney in 1981, Holtzman, 47, recalls, "my opponent had a radio commercial in which a woman with a Jewish name said, 'Liz Holtzman. I might like her for a daughter, but not for my DA.' It was a very subtle, but penetrating message. It said: It's not a job for a woman. When I think that I worked for reproductive freedom in the early 1970's and that now the whole issue has to be fought all over again, it doesn't even feel like we're standing still, but rather going backwards."

Though it's a series of hurdles, Holtzman insists, "It's very important to have women in government. It's important to have a woman's perspective for decision-making roles at every level. It's a struggle for human dignity—for women to be able to dream for themselves, and also for men to be able to slough off the constraints of stereotypes. It's difficult, but very important to be idealistic, to participate in the struggle for justice. It requires energy for a long time."

Determination is key, agrees Sophie Masloff, the 70-year-old Jewish, Democratic mayor of Pittsburgh. "If you want to do something badly enough, you do it."

Miriam Arond is a freelance writer who co-authored The First Year of Marriage *(New York: Warner Books, 1987).*

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BADGES OF SHAME

CENTURIES OF RESTRICTIVE CLOTHING

TRUDIE STROBEL

As a four-year-old in Russia, I had few comforts and playthings," says Trudie Strobel. "My prize possession was a beautiful bisque doll and I still remember the horror of it being torn away from me by a brutal Nazi guard on the transport to the camps."

More than 45 years later in California and in therapy with Dr. Robert Solow, Strobel – who had worked clenchingly *not* to remember things – began to risk the art of remembering.

"I suddenly recalled, besides the horrors and the tormentors, that I had learned my first embroidery stitches from my beloved mother when I was just a little girl," says Strobel. In a stroke of therapeutic genius, Solow and Strobel decided that she would recreate her childhood doll (Figure #1). "I started out just with the desire to do my lost doll," says Strobel. "But I wanted to dress her the way I had remembered women were forced to dress by the Nazis. As I stitched and crocheted, I found I was helped to want to live again, to live with my physical and spiritual pain, to look at a book again.

"I became fascinated with an entire subject – the history of restrictive Jewish women's clothing. I discovered that beyond the "Yellow Badges of Shame" that I remembered from my pre-school years, there existed over a millenium of restricted Jewish dress."

Within the next year, Strobel completed eleven dolls – now a permanent collection

■ FRANCE: *1940*

"I started out just wanting to do my lost doll," says Strobel of this mannequin. It depicts a Jewish woman in occupied France. Under the tyrannical regime of Adolf Hilter, Jews were forced to wear yellow arm bands.

■ FRANKFURT, GERMANY:
13th through 16th centuries

Here the red cape is a restriction, as is the yellow badge (still in the shape of a ring). Jewish women had to have two blue stripes on their headdresses, as required by the pope.

Photos: Morris P. Kagan Photographics
Courtesy of the Martyrs Memorial and Museum of the Holocaust/Los Angeles

■ EGYPT:
late 17th century

Jewish women were required to wear this long black, degrading-looking stove-pipe hat, as well as violet colored clothing.

■ TURKEY:
849 through the 15th century

When I had to attach these two different colored buttons to the garment and paint one shoe a different color from the other, tears came to my eyes," says Strobel. Here requisite Jewish dress includes two rounded yellow shoulder patches, turbans (a fashion of the times) which had to be yellow, and two buttons on garments which had to be a different color from all other buttons. [Note: Top two buttons are black, others are yellow.] By the 14th century, Jewish women were also required to wear this corded girdle and shoes of different colors.

of the Martyrs Memorial and Museum of the Holocaust in Los Angeles. "Every stitch I made," says Strobel, "I thought I was stitching up the Jewish people a little. This doll from Turkey was the most painful for me. When I had to attach these two different colored buttons on the garment and paint one shoe a different color from the other, I cried. It wasn't enough that we had to wear yellow turbans, two yellow badges, a yellow girdle—the degradation went down to the shoes—two different colored shoes. As I created these figures, I felt I was *in* each century, I *was* each of these women; I was numb."

Strobel wended her way from the personally therapeutic—from the cathartic touching over and over of her own dark private wounds—to the collectively redemptive. The fact that the Martyrs Museum uses her exhibit as a teaching tool in school programs is deeply meaningful to her.

Looking closely at these fragile, silent, beautiful dolls, one is startlingly moved by the fastidiousness of Strobel's reproductions, as well as by her extraordinary craftsmanship. Strobel is versatile: she does needlepoint, she crochets, she makes her own lace, she embroiders, she tats, she sews, she even weaves her own cloth. In making these figures, Strobel used exclusively natural fibers, authentic to each time period.

When asked about this devout, almost votive fidelity, she responds, "I wanted to do these figures as if this is a little person, you see. So I was scrupulous even in the undergarments. I checked the Jewish sumptuary laws—for example, you were only allowed to use limited amounts of lace. And putting a little embroidery on a slip, I felt, well, this is me, *Trudie*; this is something *I* would do.

"Can we really understand what these garments felt like to wear? The ruff, the *flieder* (headdress), the *viereckiger schleier* (square veil)? I felt at times that I was suffering for all of us through the ages. But when I look at each of these creations now I say, 'Oh you beautiful, beautiful Jewess! Look how pretty you are! Even though you have to wear all this heavy equipment.' We prevailed even with these handicaps, and I prevailed in making these figures attractive."

After the completion of this project, Strobel in a sense began to shed her own restrictive dress. She felt sufficiently

■ RUSSIA: *1843*

This ungainly tall yellow bonnet tied with a scarf was mandatory dress of Russian Jewish women. Juxtaposed to an otherwise festive, traditional, non-restrictive costume, it provides chilling contrast.

■ SPAIN: *14th century*

In the Kingdom of Aragon in 1396, Juan I added to Pope Innocent III's restriction of the ring-shaped yellow badge, this gramalla *(long outer gown). "The* gramalla *is pinned back here because Jews are not allowed armholes," says Strobel. "You couldn't function normally. And the toes had to be covered. You are so encased, like a tent. You stumble easily. These restrictions are physical, not just metaphorical. Such suffering."*

■ POLAND: *1850*

The Jewish restrictive dress here includes a canary-colored long, loose kerchief and a brüsttuch *(a chest covering) in which Jewish women kept their money. Jewish women wore this dress before and through the 1812 French occupation of Poland. The restrictions were reimposed by Russian Imperial order in 1850.*

girded and adorned to toast herself with more festive, celebratory themes. Her latest project, a virtuosic tapestry called "Women of Accomplishment," portrays Jewish women from Biblical times

I STARTED OUT WITH THE DESIRE TO DO MY LOST DOLL

through Anna Rosenberg (former assistant secretary of defense under Franklin D. Roosevelt) and Hannah Senesh.

It is impossible to do justice, in these few paragraphs and photographs, to Trudie and this small, triumphant task of hers. These dolls sear one in their simplicity and innocence, in their horror and depth of meaning. Trudie has breathed a bit of her soul into each creation. May this new year heal us, too. —*Susan Schnur*

■ NUREMBERG, GERMANY: *1755*

Non-Jews wore this fashionable square headdress (called a viereckiger schleier) *as well, but Jewish women had to retain two blue stripes on theirs. "The ruff here," says Strobel, "feels like a large wheel around the neck. Jewish men wore this ruff too." Wearing this restrictive dress, the yellow badge did not have to be worn.*

REVIEWS, *continued from page 6*

Oxford househusband, Shavian scholar, observant Jew and adamant agnostic, Cecil Birnbaum, goes to school to listen to Bible stories, fingerpaint and learn deep relaxation on the futon he keeps in his cubby? What about the lesson for the older children: "Hashem (God) or Darwin? *You* decide."

Jewish life in Hawaii, as exotic as it may seem, also echoes current religious dilemmas in microcosm. At a kosher wine and cheese kiddush held by an Orthodox offshoot of the local temple, a woman congregant says, "The Torah reading is the heart of the service. The aliyah is the heart of the reading. And that's just where I'm excluded . . . .This is my holy book too, and I want a piece of the action." Another member, male, points out the smallness of the group, how fragmented it already is, the importance of compromise, but to no avail. "I couldn't have women up there with me," someone else says. "Not because of me—I wouldn't leave the shul myself. But if I stayed, it would be shameful for my father's memory." The group breaks up, and the minyan is lost.

Total Immersion is provocative, sometimes infuriating and to an older reader, sometimes bewildering, but it is brilliant, incisive, remarkably witty and not to be missed. —*Faye Moskowitz*

Faye Moskowitz is the author of Whoever Finds This: I Love You *(Boston: David R. Godine, 1988) and* A Leak in the Heart *(Boston: David R. Godine, 1985).*

DON'T BLAME MOTHER: MENDING THE MOTHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP
by Paula J. Caplan, Ph.D.
New York: Harper & Row, 1989
256 pp. $17.95

The Myth of Women's Masochism, Paula Caplan's earlier work, examined how women's psyches have been maligned by psychotherapists and others. In this new book, Caplan posits that women have been *taught* to be angry with their mothers, and that we are conditioned to believe that women in general, and mothers in particular, are either "idealized angels or wicked witches." Caplan offers nine myths that keep mother-blaming alive. They are worth paying serious attention to. As I read them, I smiled knowingly.

"Perfect Mother" myths, for example. A mother, we are taught, must meet *all* her children's needs and she must be an endless source of nurturance. These standards are impossible to meet, needless to say.

"Bad Mother" myths, on the other hand, which exaggerate human flaws into monstrosities, include "Mothers are bottomless pits of neediness," "Mothers are dangerous when they are powerful," and "Mother-daughter closeness is unhealthy." These myths transform our irritation and disappointment with our mothers into what Caplan calls "fury and a sense of betrayal."

Caplan advises us to humanize our mothers and allow ourselves to know them as the imperfect beings they are. When we ask them about their fears, doubts and struggles, we begin the journey towards discovering who they really are.

—*Carol Welsch*

Carol Welsch, ACSW, is a marriage and family therapist in private practice in Millburn, New Jersey, and clinical director of Temple Sharey Tefilo-Israel's Parenting Center in South Orange.

WE'LL NEVER READ the Bible THE SAME WAY AGAIN

REVISIONIST MYTH–MAKING

ALICIA OSTRIKER

What happens when women writers re-imagine culture? What happens when we re-imagine that masculine foundation of Western culture, the Bible?

A few years ago, in my book on contemporary American women's poetry, *Stealing the Language,* I surveyed what I call "revisionist mythmaking" by contemporary women poets. Arguing that vital myths have at all times a potential for being reinterpreted, I saw women writers' revisionist versions of classical myths as "a vigorous and varied invasion of the sanctuaries of language where our meanings for 'male' and 'female' are stored." A brief example: Muriel Rukeyser's "Myth" recounts an unrecorded conversation between Oedipus and the Sphinx. Old and blind, Oedipus wants to know where he went wrong, and the Sphinx explains that he answered her famous questions incorrectly:

> *When I asked, What walks on four legs in the morning, two at noon, and three in the evening, you answered, Man. You didn't say anything about women. "When you say Man," said Oedipus, you include women too. Everyone knows that." She said, "That's what you think."*

What I find myself doing now is an extension of that work. As a critic I am noticing that the present period is generating new, probing, often outrageous feminist readings and re-imaginings of scriptural texts; and as a poet I am writing some myself.

It is obvious that writing about the Bible is a riskier matter than writing about Oedipus and the Sphinx. For "myth" signifies "stories that are sacred to some other group" while "scripture" signifies "stories that are sacred to *our* group." Yet as the poet Adrienne Rich has asserted, "Revision—the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a critical direction—is for women more than a chapter in cultural history; it is an act of survival." Furthermore, I believe that what may seem blasphemous and irreligious about feminist re-imaginings of Scripture is in fact an almost inevitable outcome of Jewish tradition. For are we not told that "there is always another interpretation" of Torah?

Throughout the history of the Diaspora, the Jewish imagination has flowered through *midrash* (storytelling about the Bible)—in which spiritual insight is inseparable from fantasy, humor, earthliness—and if the composers of *midrash* have until now been men, isn't that all the more reason for women to begin composing them? How can we have a Judaism that speaks for us all, unless women start joining that extended collective conversation? Let me add here my conviction that the spiritual life of humanity is too important to be left to those who are its official guardians. Particularly in a time of growing fundamentalisms and orthodoxies, I believe it is the business of poets to look into their own souls, perceive what visions and hear what voices they find there, and inscribe them for all of us.

I would not claim that my *midrashim* are correct, or authoritative, or final. God forbid! Yet I feel impelled by new shades of meaning,

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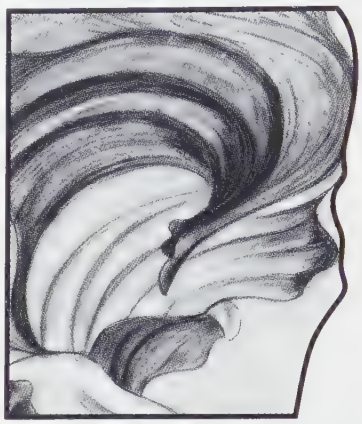
Alicia Ostriker is a poet and critic who teaches at Rutgers University. The midrashim *here are from her work-in-progress on the Bible,* The Nakedness of the Fathers. *A longer essay from that work, "Entering the Tents," will appear in a forthcoming issue of* Feminist Studies.

new ways of understanding, that are *as* valid as the old. And as a woman, I feel acutely that the Bible as we have it is an overwhelmingly masculine document in which female values have been buried—but not killed.

I am trying to expand the boundaries of feminist *midrash* by re-examining and re-imagining the *male* as well as the female figures in the biblical text: hence, Adam, Noah, Joshua. The fact is that these men are here and will not go away, in the Book or in reality, and they are by no means all alike. It is not a monolithic book, and the men are not monolithic patriarchs.

For me the story of Adam and Eve is (among other things) about the defeat of a goddess who once presided in her garden, and the upshot of her downfall. This idea is of course strongly influenced by Raphael Patai's *The Hebrew Goddess* and Merlin Stone's *When God Was a Woman*. In reading Primo Levi and thinking about his suicide, it occurred to me that Noah's drunkenness (Genesis 9:21) might have resulted from a traumatic case of survivor guilt. And when in the Bible I find a split between the values of global compassion and the values of exclusionary (self-)righteousness, at both the human and the divine level, I think: isn't this the split that still tears Jews apart today?

Those of us who are doves want to claim that *our* Judaism is the true one, while those who are hawks want to claim that *their* version of Judaism is the essential truth. But the truth is that Judaism in its breadth and depth includes and contains contradictory moral positions. What if the conqueror Joshua already knew this?



Time passes

Was her garden. Was her tree, her snake, her attributes, her happiness. This was long ago, around and around, trees all gone, long ago.

Between the thrilling light in one's head, white and vibrant, the shatteringly white light of the sunball as it climbs daily through warm air above the horizon, and the knots of fainter light within all material forms, there is constant communication. There is a triangle with ourselves, God and the world at its three corners.

Sleepy and warm, deep time, wake up. Stand up, look around. Stretch arms, recognize beauty. Meadows, sultry valleys, growing objects. Interesting. Innumerable. Single set of laws produces plum peach apple quince banana grapefruit persimmon mango pineapple pomegranate grape strawberry melon. Has produced probably all animals in their uniformity and variety. Knowledge exciting, thinking it and touching.

Listen
What is that sound

Never, never to fly above earth or to go far underneath it. This was wrongly done. Also water, we can't breathe in it, I'm angry. He swings a stick, soft grey crenellated material comes out, along with blood. What he can chew he eats. He knocks bananas down that can't be reached, this is a stick, and he joyously eats the bananas. Now he is tired. He bangs with a stick on the hard ground. Dear mother, let me in.

She cannot believe he has forgotten the dialogues with the animals. He denies evrything, he claims he never understood their languages. Maybe you *did,* you're *the natural one, he grumbles. It makes her almost cry with exasperation. Remember, she wants to say, how witty the birds were? How timid the earthworms? Remember how the horses would lose their patience and interrupt? But if she reminds him, he hits her.*

The story of Noah

It began with a gentle rain from heaven. Always a pleasure, pocks on a dry ground making it steam up, spotting the earth darkly, bringing fertility, arousing joy. We were all ready. We went inside, we listened. The rain came down harder. We were almost drunk with the sound of it. A steady beating, a hissing. Happy and safe, our family was alone in that semi-darkness with the pairs of living creatures. We embraced each other tightly, blissfully. We listened to the roaring storm. After many days, we felt our boat lift and begin to rock.

Then time came to a stop. Days weeks months. The rain still falling, the wind still blowing. Crawling, all of us, over the mounds of bodies, animal or human it was all alike, we felt boneless as worms, we stank as much as the other beasts, and the noises we made were indistinguishable from bleats, roars, and whinnyings. Outside, in the interminable grey, the knock of waves against the hull, and the hiss that was the rain still falling, there was a worse horror.

The water was crowded with the swollen dead, their hair and fingernails still growing. They flowed with the currents. They floated near the surface, jostling each other.

When we beached we felt the shock of sunlight and color, and it was hard to walk on motionless land, we staggered at first, invalids. Then we grew accustomed. Then to make a clearing we had to haul away the debris,

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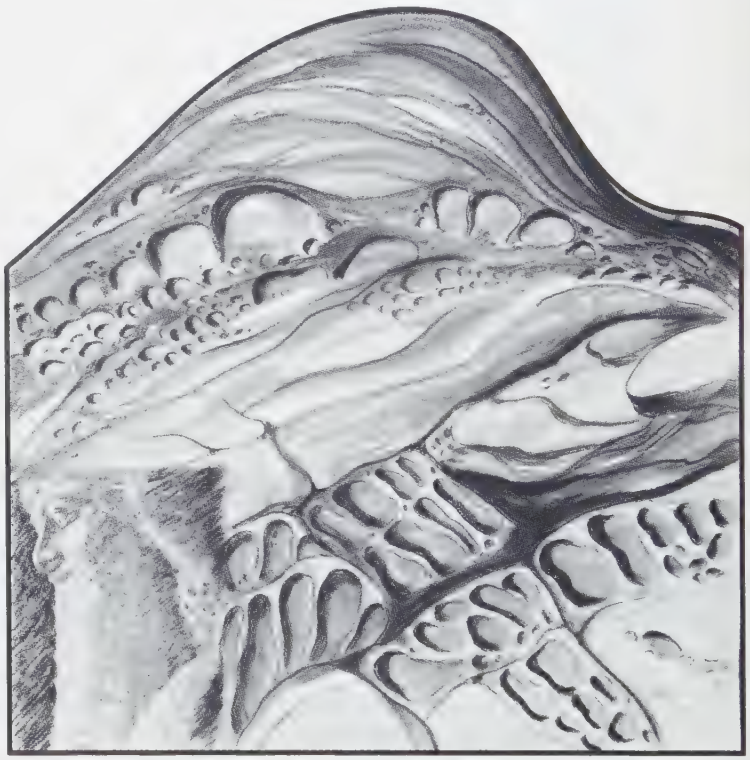
including rotted treetrunks and the bones of drowned creatures, many with seaweed and flesh dangling tangled together. But as soon as possible I went back down to the shore where the boat lay, emptied out, on its side. I examined the barnacles, all the clinging encrustation, fierce to be alive. I walked around it, examining my own workmanship proudly. The proportions of the ship noble. Good tongue and groove construction. Seams tight. Where the tar was absorbed the wood was silvered, felt like satin to the touch. Then I told my boys to make axes. By nightfall we had a pile of salt-caked wood as tall as a house. By dawn we had black coals, glowering red, resisting death as long as they could.

Genesis 9:20-21 "Noah was the first to plant a vineyard. He drank of the wine and became drunk, and he uncovered himself within his tent."

I let the bed of coals die quietly, not interfering. I can hardly exaggerate what a pleasure it was to watch the fire take its course. The heat blast, the imaginary bodies writhing in the flame and escaping, the slow subsiding. It was a pleasure destroying the work of my hands. It made me feel, you might say, like God.

After that I started drinking.

The story of Joshua



Love ye therefore the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.
—Deuteronomy 10.19

And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites.
—Joshua 3.9

We reach the promised land
Forty years later
The original ones who were slaves
Have died
The young are seasoned soldiers
There is wealth enough for everyone and God
Here at our side, the people
Are mad with excitement.
Here is what to do, to take
This land away from the inhabitants:
Burn their villages and cities
Kill their men
Kill their women
Destroy the people utterly.
God says: is that clear?
I give you the land, but
You must murder for it.
You will be a nation
Like other nations,
Your hands are going to be stained like theirs
Your innocence annihilated.
Keep listening, Joshua.
Only to you among the nations
Do I also give knowledge
The secret
Knowledge that you are doing evil,
The burden of compassion for the stranger
You who know the heart of the stranger
Since you were exiles in Egypt—
A torch to light your passage
Through the labyrinths of history forever.
This is the agreement.
Is it entirely
Clear, Joshua,
Said the Lord.
I said it was. He then commanded me
To destroy Jericho.

ADULT BAT MITZVAH

CHANGING WOMEN, CHANGING SYNAGOGUES

by Ruth Mason

In the past decade, thousands of Jewish women have claimed for themselves the childhood rite of Bat Mitzvah. While no one seems to know who the first adult Bat Mitzvah was, she ignited a spark that has crisscrossed the continent, inspiring with possibility many women who needed just such a ceremony to affirm their Jewishness, connect with or make a public commitment to a Jewish community, mark a turning point in the life cycle or right an old wrong.

The new ritual is appealing to women from their 20's to their 80's; to homemakers, students and working women. They are women who grew up Orthodox, matured into a feminist consciousness and wanted something they weren't allowed to have at 12 or 13. They are secular Jews from assimilated homes who came to Judaism later in life. They are converts who want to intensify a commitment to their new faith. And they are everything in between.

Since there is no prescribed course of study for a Bat Mitzvah, preparation varies according to the women's needs and circumstances. Janice Rous, 39, already knew Hebrew, had taken classes on Judaism in the past and was comfortable with the *siddur* (prayer book). She walked around her Manhattan apartment with headphones for a couple of months learning her Torah *trop* (cantillation) so she could chant her chosen *parshah* (Torah portion) in front of family and friends.

Amy Yatzkan, who came from a nonreligious background, spent two years with a Jewish studies teacher, Lenore Sones, in classes especially designed for adult Bat Mitzvah preparation in Princeton, New Jersey. Many such classes evolve into sisterhoods in which the participants discuss personal issues in a Jewish context. "The best way I know to educate people is through their personal lives," says Rabbi Melvin Glazer of the Jewish Center of Princeton, which saw 22 adult B'not Mitzvah ceremonies last year.

The ceremonies women choose are equally varied. Some get up on the *bimah* (podium) on a Shabbat morning, read the Torah and *haftarah* (portions from the Prophets), deliver a *dvar Torah* (lesson or commentary on the Torah), sponsor a kiddush and throw a party. Others celebrate quietly at home.

Nancy Tishkoff became a Bat Mitzvah at the age of 23 in Camp Swig in California, dancing outdoors beside the Torah to guitar music and her own tape-recorded speech. Some women incorporate new Jewish feminist liturgical music into their ceremonies. Many synagogues organize special services on Friday night or Saturday morning, in which an entire class of adult B'not Mitzvah share a Torah reading and make short speeches.

"It's a healthier kind of Bat/Bar Mitzvah than we have for our children," says Rabbi Lauren Levy, associate director of Hillel at Rutgers University. "The values are better, the ceremonies are more geared to the feelings involved. In the weekly adult Bat Mitzvah classes that I hold at the university, I see women waking up. They create new roles for themselves. These classes reinforce our own female models."

Leonard B. Abrams

While some women choose to celebrate adult Bat Mitzvah with innovative ceremonies and ritual objects created especially for women such as the flower-decorated Torah pointer (above) by Hana Geber for In the Spirit Gallery, others use more traditional formats, as these women did in 1980 at Temple Israel of Great Neck, New York.

A woman's tallit *(prayer shawl) made from antique lace by fabric artist Elsa Wachs.*

Synagogues have been benefitting from this new cadre of learned women. Says Rabbi Glazer of Amy Yatzkan: "When she first came, she knew nothing. Now she's an ace Torah reader. She's one of the major players around here." Glazer says several of the synagogue's board members have become B'not Mitzvah. "We now have knowledgeable Jews in the congregation's leadership, so they don't just talk about raising money, they talk about Torah," he says. Some of this new focus will, one hopes, rub off on male congregants as well, and the fact that women are willing to come forward to learn synagogue skills as adults has opened the door for men who, for a variety of reasons, may themselves not have become Bar Mitzvah as youths.

Despite the diversity of the women, their backgrounds, motivations and ceremonies all seem to share this: becoming a Bat Mitzvah as an adult is a deeply meaningful event in their lives, and one with a lasting impact. It is a watershed, an odyssey, a spiritual milestone. They use superlatives when discussing the preparations and celebrations. Some weep as they tell their stories.

When Gila Gevirtz was eight, she would stand in front of the bathroom mirror and imagine she was a *rebbetzin* (rabbi's wife). In her Orthodox Brooklyn home and community, masculinity was expressed by being a *talmid chacham* (a man learned in Torah) and femininity by supporting and helping the "shining male."

As a child, Gila was passionately in love with Judaism. "I thought the air on Shabbat was a different color," she says. As she got older, her independence and sharp intellect opened Gila's eyes to the inequality all around her. Although she was just as smart and capable as the boys, they could be counted in a *minyan* (quorum) and she could not. They could read the *haftarah* and she could not.

By her teens, these feelings had jelled into anger. "What kind of raw deal did I get?" she asks today. "Why wasn't I provided by my religion—which formed my mentality—with the sense that I could be a leader?" At 16, Gila arrived in Israel for her sophomore year abroad. It was Thursday. The following night—Erev Shabbat—she was offered a ride in someone's car. (Riding on the Sabbath was something she would never have done as an Orthodox Jew.) She took the ride and never looked back. Over pasta and squid in a restaurant in New York's East Village, Gila, now 42, talks about her return—on her own terms—to a religion she once felt had betrayed her.

"For me, family and religion were indivisible. I knew until I resolved the conflicts with one, I couldn't have peace with the other."

At the same time, she had "a middle-aged realization that the time had come for me to address community. I wanted to say 'we' instead of 'I.' I had achieved personal, professional and financial success and I was ready for something more."

That "something more" crystallized for Gila when she entered Manhattan's West End Synagogue (Reconstructionist) for the first time at the age of 40. "I come to this shul and I see—my God—women are taking on all the roles here. I saw women doing *haftarot*. I'd never seen that before.

"Going to shul was like returning to the scene of the crime. I wanted to right an old wrong.

"I realized if I wanted this equality, I had to be prepared to take on the responsibility. It's like women getting the vote and not using it. It's not just a matter of putting on a *tallit* (prayer shawl). I had to learn to read Torah and *haftarah* and to do a *dvar Torah*.

"Bat Mitzvah was a rite of passage I'd never taken. This was not about saying, "I'm an adult." It was a commitment to community for better or worse, a moment when I said, "I'm not perfect and neither is the community, but we need each other."

People told Gila she glowed on the day of her Bat Mitzvah. "It was absolutely the most glorious day of my life. It was very important for me to make a *simcha* (a celebration; literally, a happiness). Single women don't have occasions to make *simchas*."

Gila is now an active participant in her congregation. This fall, she will be teaching a class on preparing a *dvar Torah*. She sees *parshat Lech Lecha*—the Torah portion in which God tells Abraham to leave his father's house and seek his own path—as a metaphor for her own journey.

"I am no longer living my parents' Judaism," she says. "I have left my father's house."

In contrast to Gila's odyssey, Amy Yatzkan's route to a Bat Mitzvah was a slow passage toward something she had never had. Her parents were committed to Israel and to civil rights—and to Amy's brother's Bar Mitzvah. Religion—at least the Jewish religion—did not play much of a role in her childhood. The year of her brother's Bar Mitzvah was the one year Amy was sent to religious school, and she hated it.

"I was active in anti-war work and was hanging out with Quakers and Unitarians," she says. "On one Jewish history exam, I crossed out the questions, turned the paper over and wrote an essay on the benefits of Quakerism."

Amy left what little Judaism she had been exposed to behind, became a clinical

social worker and was living in Princeton when a small notice about a Saturday morning Torah study group caught her eye. Seven years later, Amy is still hard put to explain what drew her to the class. It was not a conscious search for roots or for community. "I had no trouble meeting people," she says. "I also went to a chamber music class at the YWCA. I just thought it would be interesting."

Although she didn't know it at the time, the decision to check out the Torah study group changed Amy's life. She was excited by and impressed with the depth and complexity of the Bible. Her first year in the group, Amy didn't say a word. The second year—and the second time through the Torah—she began to ask questions.

"I got such good feedback for the questions I was asking. I began to realize that's what Judaism is about. The questions." By the end of that year, the group leader started asking Amy for her opinions and "I started to think about Torah."

During the third year, the members took turns leading the class. "It came to be my turn to teach," Amy recalls. "That week was the most humbling week of my life. By that point, I was just amazed by the Torah."

The morning she led the class, it occurred to Amy that some members went into services afterward. She decided to join them and found herself taken by the music. Within two weeks, she was studying Hebrew. A few months later, she delivered a *dvar Torah*, which she calls "the best thing I ever did." Three years later, she joined a once-a-month chavurah-style *minyan* and that summer attended the National Havurah Institute, where she wore a *tallit* for the first time. "I was transformed," she says. "I discovered how powerful prayer was.

"I'm not a spiritual person, but I was connecting with the people and with something in me. I was able to have a spiritual experience even though I was so lacking in knowledge and skills. And I still hadn't tackled God."

The following year, Amy responded to another newsletter notice—this time about a meeting for women interested in a Bat Mitzvah class.

"After all those years of dabbling, I still had huge gaps. I didn't know what Purim was. I didn't go to High Holiday services."

Why a Bat Mitzvah? "I felt a need to go beyond studying Judaism because I liked it. Through my Bat Mitzvah I was saying to this community, I am now obligated to this and you hold me to it. I have a responsibility to keep trying to open the doors of what it means to be Jewish."

Amy, 37, stresses the importance of community in her return to Judaism. "I didn't just study Torah, I studied Torah with people," she says.

Now that she knows Hebrew, Amy faces a new set of problems as she encounters sexism in the classical liturgy. "You're saying *'baruch atah,'* she says, "and the images of God the King hit you in the face. I don't know where I am with that."

The next step, Amy says, is to deepen her studies of Hebrew and texts and to try to find a way to put Jewish ethical teachings into practice. "I've been very introspective; I've been sitting in shul for seven years. Some people would say that's not a Jewish life. Who have I helped? What have I done? I'm trying to figure out now how to *live* some of these things."

Gila and Amy's stories echo those of

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Tapping a Stone

by Jane Schapiro

A coin, a shard, a pot, a lamp.
An archeologist explains how our world's
best secrets are the hardest to find.
Like him we believed in buried treasures,
thought we could, under the smooth terrain
of my naked body, find that one dark cave
where our waters run.
After all, we had the map, knew the rules,
charted the peaks and valleys of our indigenous territory,
and every evening before a full length mirror
we'd find one more clue to convince us.
But somehow we were wrong,
the parched earth didn't yield,
the small brown smudge of the pregnancy test
signaled only a river gone dry.

Beneath every stone a story,
the archeologist lectures on,
his fingers coiled around an ancient vase.
I watch him closely, as if he is a remnant,
a bit of unearthed truth
sifted out from a handful of dirt.
How I'd like to hold him up,
his long legs and thick neck,
and say 'Here,
this is it, our proof.'
Inside bones and brittle rocks
is the dust, the ground, and
the breath of life.

Jane Schapiro is a Virginia-based poet whose work has appeared in Moment, Poetry East, Sou'wester *and* The Webster Review.

Cont'd from previous page

other women who have decided to become B'not Mitzvah. But many others have taken different routes. For Helen Powers, who celebrated her Bat Mitzvah on her 75th birthday, the ceremony was an expression of achieving autonomy after widowhood, and a way of reconnecting to her Hebrew-filled childhood.

Linda Bronfman was turning 30, was single at the time and felt she needed a ritual to deal with the "crisis." While she had had a Bat Mitzvah party at 12, Linda realized in retrospect that her brother "had more." At the ceremony she wore a new *tallit* made up of patchwork squares with written, drawn and embroidered messages from close friends and family.

Nancy Helman Shneiderman, of Washington, D.C., used her Bat Mitzvah ceremony to "coalesce her identity in mid-life." As a therapist, she also knew that being a parent heightens our awareness of our own past deprivations. In order to be fully present for her daughter at *her* Bat Mitzvah, Nancy decided to give herself what she hadn't had. "It was my responsibility," she says, "to deal with the unsatisfied child within me."

Sophie Folick was in her 60's when she decided to become Bat Mitzvah. "The big word was *not* Bat Mitzvah; the big word was HELP. I said to the rabbi, "Can you help me?" I had just lost my husband, and my grown son was desperately ill. I thought I'd find direction by learning more about my religion." Sophie's son died on September 14th. "First I said, forget this whole Bat Mitzvah. But then I learned an entire new *haftarah* and did it on the anniversary of my son's birthday—January 20th. What a way to honor my son. What a way to tell him I love him."

Dona Feldman Munker's Jewish identity was a "conflict of confusions." She had been raised in a liberal, assimilated home in Pasadena, California and married her college pen pal, a German Protestant. Both in Germany and in the U.S. with a German husband, she felt uncertain about how Jewish she still was—or could be. Like Gila, she felt she needed to resolve her conflict so she could move on. Studying for her Bat Mitzvah at the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue in Manhattan (which has had 75 adult B'not Mitzvah since 1982), and celebrating with her class there, gave her the connection she needed and the opportunity to affirm her Jewishness publicly. "I no longer feel like an exile," she says. "Now I know who I am."

Some see the adult Bat Mitzvah ceremony as a phenomenon unique to this particular time in history. We will soon have caught up with ourselves. Bat Mitzvah is now an accepted rite for 12- and 13-year-old Jewish girls in Reform, Reconstructionist, Conservative and even some Orthodox congregations (although, in the latter case, not on Shabbat). But every woman interviewed for this article stressed that she would not have had as deep, meaningful or rich an experience at 13 as she had as an adult. Jewish women have been creating life-cycle ceremonies to fill the gaps in our male-oriented tradition. Perhaps the time has come to institute an *eshet mitzvah* (woman of the commandment) ceremony so even girls who are Bat Mitzvah in their early teens can still experience the intense joy and affirmation an adult Bat Mitzvah can bring.

Ruth Mason is a freelance writer based in New York City who writes frequently on Jewish topics.

A Childhood without Parents

The author at age 16 (above) and today (left)

BY EDNA MANES

I remember very little about my mother. I wish that I could remember sitting on my mother's lap. Did she ever put her arms around my sister and me? No matter how hard I try, all I remember is somebody jumping off the table. She wore a long, black skirt and a blouse with a high collar. A man was standing there. He was a peddler selling vegetables. His basket was on the floor. I remember he also watched my mother jump off the table. We were all fascinated.

Later on in life I wondered: Why did she jump off the table so vigorously? When I told this story to a friend who had lived in Europe, she said, "Oh, my mother jumped off the table too. She jumped and jumped. They did not want to be pregnant again."

We lived in Antwerp in a small apartment. There was a lamp over the table in the dining room. My father would put money into a box, and the light would be on for a while, and then there would be darkness unless my father inserted another coin. He would roll cigarettes.

One day, there was a lot of commotion. People were coming and going, and then my mother was sent to the hospital. I never saw her again. She had a baby and died. We never saw the baby.

Very soon after that, my father said to us, "Today I'm going to take you out and buy you clothes." He had a big piece of paper on which was written the list of things he had to get. A few days later we took a train and, although we didn't realize it, we were in a different country. We were in Cologne, Germany, and the year was 1913.

We arrived at a big building. We were ushered into an office where a man talked to us, and suddenly my father was gone. He hadn't even said goodbye. A woman placed us in chairs and was speaking a language we didn't understand. She cut, chopped our hair off. I sobbed, bewildered, because I loved my hair. My sister kicked, spat and screamed. She tried to scratch the woman's face. They had to discontinue the job for the day. Next, we were taken to a dormitory with rows and rows of iron beds. We were given one bed to share. We lay down, sobbed, and wondered why our father had left us there. From then on I can remember everything that happened to me—it was such a shock.

The next morning we were overwhelmed. We saw all the other children in our big room. They also had shaven heads and wore grey dresses and aprons like we had been given. I realized that I was not alone in my misery.

We followed the others into a large dining hall with long wooden tables and benches. There was silence; no one talked. At our place was a piece of bread, marmalade and a mug of brown liquid—a substitute for milk. The teacher, Miss Mayer, sat sternly at the head of the table and watched us eat. Afterwards, we were escorted back to our bedrooms where we were taught how to make our beds. From there we went to the school, which was upstairs on the third floor of the building. There was also a small sanctuary.

The home was very religious. It was like a convent, but Jewish. There were blessings for everything. Our meals were meager, and it always took much longer to pray after eating than it actually took to eat. At night we prayed to God and then our country and Kaiser Wilhelm II.

The home was very religious. It was like a convent, but Jewish.

My sister and I soon became quite fluent in German. We could now talk with the other children. At night, after Miss Mayer had left, we would take off our aprons and place them on our heads, imagining that we had long hair and beautiful braids.

Leaving the home for walks was a torture for us. We were forced to walk three to a row. There were more than 30 of us, so we were quite a spectacle. Children we passed called us names.

There were boys in this home, but we were only allowed to talk to them on weekends. During the week, the closest we got to the boys was in the play yard. A big fence separated us from them. Sometimes we would push our faces against the fence and try to talk to them quickly without getting caught. Some of the children were brothers and sisters, so it was hard to understand this cruel separation.

We never saw a piece of paper or notebook the first few years. We had a slate and chalk. Our slate was our most valuable possession.

Soon after we arrived, we learned that our beloved Kaiser had declared war. We were told to say a special prayer so he could conquer the whole world. One of the first countries to be invaded was Belgium, so we were never allowed to speak Flemish or talk about Belgium again. Belgium was my native country.

At night when I said all my prayers and prayed for the Kaiser, I also prayed for my father. I knew that, wherever he was, he would come and help the Kaiser and win the war. I imagined the war was like a great tug of war with a long line of Germans on one side, all the other countries on the other, and they were pulling, tugging, pulling, tugging and running. I could picture my father arriving, galloping on a horse.

In 1918, the Kaiser was defeated and went to Holland. We were very sad. The occupation came. At the school we had a new director, a man by the name of Mr. Schneider. We were given pretty clothes and were allowed to let our hair grow. Someone even gave us ribbons, and we braided our hair and tied it with bows.

On the first night of Passover, suddenly there was a knock at the window. We could see soldiers standing there. We were told that we would all be killed and we all started to cry. After a terribly long while, the director of the school came back into the dining room, arm-in-arm with the soldiers. The soldiers were not enemies after all. They were Jewish boys from Brooklyn, New York, and they sat down and joined our seder, singing and praying. From then on, they became our benefactors. They brought us gum which they taught us how to chew. They brought us soap which was very precious, as there was no fat, and we had to be very careful using it. The occupation, instead of being a horrible time for us, became, in a way, the happiest time in our childhood.

Now that we could dress like regular children, we enjoyed taking walks. During the occupation, there was one street where soldiers would go. We were told that there were women sitting there half-naked, so we would run through Molke Strasse and pretend we were covering our eyes. We would see what we wanted to see. We did not know what it was all about. I looked at the girls' faces, and I felt sorry for them.

Lo and behold, one day, towards the end of 1919, we were sent to the office where Mr. Schneider gave us a letter from our father. It came all the way from Brooklyn, New York, United States of America. In it was a printed card: Mr. and Mrs. Morris Silber. "Mr. and Mrs.," said Mr. Schneider, "means Herr and Frau. It means your father is married again."

In the letter was one dollar, and we were allowed to go out and buy something. I had always wanted to eat an egg and so went out and bought one. Mr. Schneider gave permission for me to go into the kitchen, and they boiled it for me. I didn't get to eat this egg though, because it was a time when there were many refugees sent to our home to be fed (we had one of the biggest kitchens in Cologne), and in front of me a refugee sat, nursing her baby and looking at my egg. To this day, every time I eat a boiled egg, I can't get rid of that woman's hungry-looking eyes. I gave her my egg.

It was November, 1919 when we were told we were leaving the home and going back to Belgium. From Belgium we would be sailing to America. We would first be spending a few days with relatives in Antwerp. My sister was eleven-years old and I was twelve.

A man whom we didn't know was in charge of us. We took a train from Cologne. When we arrived in Antwerp, the man brought us to our aunt. When he rang the bell, the woman didn't know us at first. She said that she hadn't ordered any children and refused to accept us. After a while, she looked at us and realized who we were. She said, "We will take you, but you cannot say one German word, because if you utter one German word, the Belgians will kill you." We had forgotten Flemish, so there was no way for us to speak.

The few days we spent in Antwerp were a different world. My aunt had a beautiful house. There were loads of wonderful foods that I had never seen. The bread was white and so good that we were afraid to eat it. We would hide it in our briefcases, which were about the only worldly possessions we had. Mine contained my notebook with my compositions which I treasured very much and still have to this day.

Every morning my sister and I would take a walk, and all we would say was: *"Quelle heure est-il?" "Quelle heure est-il?" "Quelle heure est-il?"* Since we had forgotten Flemish and were afraid to speak German, we were reduced to one phrase we knew in French.

Our ship arrived, and we said goodbye to our aunt. We were all alone. We felt all alone, too. There were many people on the steamer. We travelled third-class, on the bottom of the ship, steerage. There was plenty of food. For breakfast we had sausages, which I had never seen before. However, people were always seasick, and sometimes the meals became a nightmare. People were eating chains of garlic which they had hanging around their necks, believing that they wouldn't get seasick that way.

One of the stewards on the ship, a young man, took a special interest in my sister and me. He tried to teach us a little English. The first thing we learned was, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again."

Our voyage took two weeks. Just before the boat landed in the New York harbor, and just before we saw the Statue of Liberty beckoning us, a woman came up to me. She said, "It is too dangerous for you to hold your passports and your papers. You're too little." She said, "Let me have your passports."

I said, "No."

She said, "I'll take good care of them."

So we gave her our papers.

The ship docked at Ellis Island. There was screaming and yelling. There were many people waiting for passengers. We couldn't find the woman who had all our papers. We looked and looked, and then we all had to stand in line. We didn't know what to do. We went to a bench and sat down there and cried and cried. We were very afraid that we would be sent back, but where to? God knows, where to? Where was the woman who was supposed to protect us?

I had always wanted to eat an egg and so I went out and bought one.

Suddenly a man, a customs official, came up to us. He realized that we couldn't speak English. He spoke German. We told him the whole story, and he took us into an office. There were the biggest books that I had ever seen. He said, "Let's see." He looked through one of the books, and there were all the names of the passengers who had arrived on that steamer. Thank God, there was our name. He said, "Now don't worry, you're okay and you will get new papers."

With all the excitement of people entering the United States, I remember a pretty young woman standing by the dock, beautifully dressed. She was singing patriotic songs, welcoming all the immigrants.

We noticed a man waving at us. Of course, we didn't know it was our father. The customs officer said, "Is this your father?" We just shrugged our shoulders. He kept nodding his head. We said, "If he says so, then he has to be our father."

Edna Manes, at 82, lives in Bennington, Vermont. A great-grandmother, her hobby is handwriting analysis. She is a library and Red Cross volunteer.

KOL ISHAH

Continued from page 5

back to work after many years of being homemakers, we need to value all those real and substantial skills we've mastered through running a household and managing a family, as well as the skills we developed in the voluntary sector. If letting go of a project when it's in place is a skill we already learned when we had to let go of our children, so much the better: let us use it!

How will the women of the 90's relate to the traditional paths to power in Jewish communal life, which have been twofold—contributing money and working hard?

Traditionally, we women have not viewed ourselves as having the autonomy to give money on our own. We perceived the money in the family as our father's or our husband's money, and frequently they would decide what the family contribution would be, and, more often than not, *they* were known as the donors, not us.

When I was divorced, I actually included maintenance of charitable contributions as part of my divorce negotiations, precisely to avoid having divorce end my ability to maintain leadership status in the community. This is certainly one thing other women in this position should think about doing. —*Judith Stern Peck*

EXPLORING OUR FEARS, FINDING OUR COURAGE

At this year's National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) conference held in Towson, Maryland from June 14-18, the Jewish Women's Caucus ran nearly a dozen workshops on a wide range of issues, sponsored fiction and poetry readings and provided a Shabbat service.

Following are excerpts from a panel called "Exploring Our Fears, Finding Our Courage: Jewish Feminists Speak About The Israeli and Palestinian Future."

In the first excerpt, Mindy Shapiro, who is a director for the Jewish Campus Activities Board in Philadelphia, addresses the impact, over the last two years, of the *intifada* and Israeli politics on Jewish college students.

In the second, Irena Klepfisz, one of the founders of The Jewish Women's Committee To End the Occupation, talks about what it feels like to take a public stand in the Jewish community protesting the acts of other Jews, in this case, the Israeli government.

Mindy: An informal study was done by someone at the University of Pennsylvania. She talked to 100 students in the dorms, asking them how they felt about Israel. Now we must realize that the entire undergraduate population was born on or after the 1967 war. They were five-years old during the '73 war, and were under the age of ten during the raid on Entebbe. They totally missed the positiveness of the years between '67 and '73 when, for older generations, emotional attachment to Israel was built up. They missed the rallies and the Israel parades. In their lives, Israel has always been the aggressor. Their first memory is '82: Israel as the occupier. For those of us who are older, we always saw Israelis and Jews as underdogs. Now the Palestinians are the underdogs and the Israelis are the oppressors. Many students don't feel much responsibility for her, Israel.

Israel has been a source of embarrassment for many of these students who are just now forming their identities. People ask them, "Why are Israeli soldiers beating innocent Palestinian women?" They don't have any response. They feel inadequate, as Jews, to respond. It confuses them.

These students have a basic lack of knowledge about Israel. They read the newspaper, they know facts about the P.L.O. and Arafat, but they don't know what Israelis do for a living, or what falafel tastes like, or that Arabs and Jews are also neighbors and friends. Some of the questions that unaffiliated Jewish students ask are: "Why should I have any connection to Israel at all?" and "Am I a bad Jew if I don't have a burning desire to visit Israel like my friend down the hall does?" "Why should I care?" "Where do I belong on these issues?" Students don't know what to do with their feelings about the whole Israel affair. Often there isn't a space on campus to talk about these feelings. There hasn't been literature coming out of the Jewish community to help them answer their questions.

On the other hand, some Jewish student leaders say that the political situation has given them an opportunity to talk with Palestinian students on campus, to "hear" them and create friendships. Otherwise, they probably would never have connected.

The campus world is almost like a mini-Middle East. You have Palestinian and Jewish students in dorms together, in classrooms together, eating together. It's much different from our post-college world. For students, there's this whole other element of pain.

Irena: In April of 1988, I helped found The Jewish Women's Committee To End the Occupation. It was certainly a political act I would never have foreseen from myself. I never thought I would take a public stand openly, on the street, in front of a Jewish organization, protesting the acts of another group of Jews; in this case, the actions of the Israeli government.

I was raised in a survivors' Holocaust community. I'm a child survivor myself. I think I was imbued with fears of public criticism, of keeping the ranks tight, and I think I really absorbed that to a great degree. But by the time the *intifada* was in its fifth month, I felt I could no longer

MAZEL TOV

RENEE EPELBAUM, founder of Argentina's "Mothers of the Disappeared" is a recipient of Hadassah's 1989 Henrietta Szold Award.

JULIA WOLF MAZOW, LILITH's fiction editor, is a 1989 recipient of the Women of Achievement award given by the Houston chapter of the American Jewish Committee. Her memoirs will become part of the Iris Siff Women of Achievement Oral History Library.

MARLENE PROVIZER has been named executive director of the Jewish Fund for Justice.

RABBI SANDY EISENBERG SASSO of Indianapolis has been elected president of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association.

allow the official organized Jewish community to speak for me and to speak for many other Jews who I knew were also dissenting.

It was a very exhilarating moment when three of us decided to do this. But I have to say that when we finally stood in front of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations on Park Avenue, the reality of what I was doing hit me.

A lot of us who are activists appear very confident and unconflicted and courageous when we appear on panels like this one today, but my knees were jelly standing on Park Avenue with all the doubts of what I was doing as a Jew. Was I betraying the Jewish people? Was I jeopardizing Israel's existence—because my position was for a two-state solution in Israel and Palestine?

I was afraid. I was ashamed to some degree. I thought, "Maybe I really am doing something wrong."

What was interesting was that I became more afraid of other Jews. I was appalled at what other Jews said to me. I can't tell you how often I was told that I should have died in the ovens. I've been called a Nazi. (Nazis, apparently, are the equivalent of being called Arab.) I could see the kind of rage and violence behind this sort of name-calling. It was an interesting switch for me in terms of this community that I had always thought of as being safe and mine. Suddenly I felt, "Some of these people are really dangerous."

. . . The news is terrible, the West Bank, the continual deaths, the killings, it fills you with despair. But when I think of our *Jewish Women's Peace Bulletin*, I'm filled with hope. When I think of what is happening between Palestinian women and Israeli women, of the activism . . . it must give you hope.

"WOMEN'S GROUP FOR SURVIVAL IN REFUSAL"

Members of the Moscow-based Women's Group for Survival in Refusal have issued an open appeal for continued support of their cause, despite official Soviet statements concerning the treatment of Soviet Jews.

The women released the following appeal in June 1989:

We can't exercise our human rights to emigrate with our families to the countries that we dream of and which agree to admit us, where our parents, sisters, brothers and many other relatives live, with which we are connected by deep historic and spiritual roots. The very moment we applied for exit visas our lives stopped. Our children suffer most of all from this situation because they are cruelly and mercilessly persecuted by school administrations and anti-Semitic classmates.

Soviet propaganda tries its best to slander us, to give us the image of traitors and enemies of humanity. We are absolutely without rights, and we are completely in their power. We have no other way out but to turn to you, the people of the free and democratic world, and appeal to you for help.

The Soviet press and officials seek to persuade you that the problem of refuseniks—Jews and non-Jews—is completely solved, that there are no more refuseniks in the USSR. Unfortunately, it's not so!

Of course, it's clear that the level of Soviet Jewish emigration greatly increased in the last few months. It's due to the great wish of the Soviet government to get rid of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment [which links U.S. trade benefits to the Soviet Union with free emigration]. But the system of hostages continues to exist.

We long-term refuseniks are now not so numerous. Some of us, thanks to your pressure, finally achieved their long-awaited freedom. We ask and beg you—don't forget us! Continue to stand by us. Don't weaken your efforts to help us survive and get rid of the iron chains.

A FIRST: WIZO OPENS IN MOSCOW

The Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO) has just formed a local group in Moscow to educate women and children about Jewish issues.

With the increase in Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union, there is also an increased demand by Jews for a more intensive Jewish life, according to Inna Joffe Uspensky, the head of the Moscow nucleus. About twenty women attended the first seminar, including representatives of all refusenik groups in Moscow.

While a WIZO delegation led by Raya Jaglom, president of WIZO, had visited Moscow in 1964 at the official invitation of the Soviet Women's Committee, no attempts had been made to start a group in the U.S.S.R. until now.

OBITUARIES

RITA LEVINE, an assistant defender in the mental health department of the Defender Association of Philadelphia, died in July as a result of injuries suffered in the July 6 terrorist attack on an Egged bus traveling from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Levine, 39, was on a six-month leave of absence from her job while preparing for admission to the Israeli Bar Association.

HELEN HADASSAH LYONS, a pioneer in Jewish education for women, died in August in New Rochelle, New York. She was 79-years old. Lyons was the first woman in the U.S. to complete the full curriculum at a recognized rabbinical college, the Reform movement's Jewish Institute of Religion. Although not ordained, she lectured and preached widely and became an advocate for women's ordination.

TRUDE WEISS-ROSMARIN, editor of the quarterly journal *The Jewish Spectator,* died in Santa Monica, California in July at the age of 81. She was regarded as a maverick and as a strong believer in peaceful coexistence with the Arabs. She had published *The Spectator* for 53 years, and continued putting out the journal despite her poor health.

Weiss-Rosmarin, who was born in Frankfurt, wrote extensively about "authentic Judaism" and Jewish survival, both in her magazine and in her books. She studied at the Universities of Berlin, Leipzig and Wurzburg, from which she received a doctorate in 1931. She immigrated to the U.S. shortly after.

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NACHES OF A DIFFERENT SORT:

Raising an Autistic Child

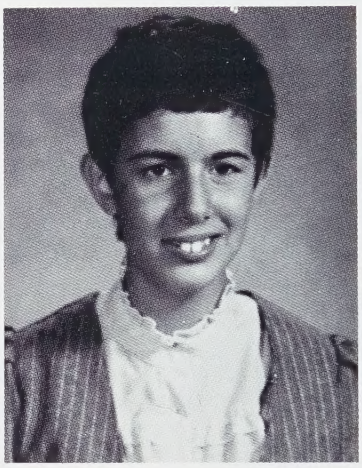
By Rachelle Namak

Harriet Goldhor Lerner's story (Spring 1989) about her achievements and those of her sister made me think of the Yiddish expression *naches fun kinder* (pleasure from children's accomplishments). Of all the Yiddish expressions which my parents uttered, this one took precedence. Like a magical incantation, these words accompanied every report card, every word of praise from a teacher, every certificate, every diploma. Long before the age of pop psychology, I grasped intuitively that my parents were looking to my sister and me to compensate them for their immigrants' lives of privation and anxiety.

I never chafed under this expectation to bring home *naches,* to let my parents warm themselves in the reflected glow of my accomplishments. Bringing home *naches* was simply my job.

Such understandings die hard, if they ever die at all. When I was pregnant with my daughter, I, too, dreamed dreams of all my child would be to me. More sophisticated than my own mother in the damage done by vicarious living and hidden messages, I chided myself guiltily for such atavistic notions. But, try as I might, *"naches fun kinder"* hovered over my baby's cradle. All the aunts and uncles wished for me the blessing of *naches,* the centuries-old benediction. "May she be a source of joy; may she gladden your old age."

My daughter was three years of age when she was diagnosed as autistic, and all talk of *naches* abruptly stopped. Indeed, all talk of my daughter changed from exclamations on her brown-eyed beauty to whispered exchanges among the relatives when they thought I could not hear. The word "autistic"—now in vogue with the popularity of the Dustin Hoffman film "Rainman"—was unheard of in my mother's world. At a loss to explain how a beloved grandchild could be irreparably damaged, my mother took refuge and solace in a world of denial. Like many women of her background, she pooh-poohed the diagnosis of the doctors, and, at the same time, looked to the gods of science to one day—soon—cure my baby.



Shula Namak

Ten years have passed, and no miracle of science has appeared. My daughter, at thirteen, is still a beauty. Rare is the picture which does her justice, for she does not flirt with the camera. When I ask her to smile, she points to her mouth, but, depending on her mood, the smile may or may not come.

For many years, while my daughter was growing up, I felt myself forever shut out from the *naches* my family had wished for me at her birth. The word carried with it the aura of education, prizes, trophies and material success. My child, at age thirteen, has no speech. She has a limited vocabulary of signs which she uses for communication. She cannot read, but she loves to look at magazines. She is locked away from me in her own world much of the time. My love is powerless to break down the wall which separates us.

And yet, in a way which my mother and my aunts perhaps can never grasp, my daughter has brought me *naches* beyond telling. It is she who has taught me a wisdom which all my university classes ignored. Walking with my daughter on a summer's day beside the lake, I watch her stop to pick the dandelions in her path. She throws stones in the water and laughs out loud as they splash. She touches the down on a baby's head and shrieks as it chortles. My daughter loves the smell of pizza and the touch of her stuffed animals. Her world is very much a world of the senses, one which we are educated to downgrade in deference to the world of the intellect. Her joy is in the moment, pure and unsullied.

My handicapped child has taught me that *naches* comes not solely from academic glory, but from every halting step on the road to independence. She may need me to finish tying her shoes, but the first step she can do herself, and it lifts my heart with pride. She can pour herself a glass of milk and peel her orange—tasks which, for her, require concentration and diligence.

My daughter is a joy to me. It is not the joy my mother envisaged. Nor is it the joy I envisaged when I was carrying her years ago in Winnipeg. She will never read these words of love. I hug her and tell her I love her, and I hope that somehow my love flows to her through my touch and the sound of my voice.

My daughter will never dedicate a book to me, nor will she thank me in a graduation ceremony. She will never tell me in words that she loves me. She dreams her own dream, as I dreamed a dream separate from that of my own mother.

My daughter does not need to lay trophies at my feet to make me proud. It is enough for me that she is.

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